

Message from the Chief

Chief's Memo – February 14, 2006

This week I would like to share some perspectives regarding my first 30 days as Acting Director. It has been a fast-paced month. I have had the opportunity to meet many CDF employees and listen to their ideas for making CDF an even better place to work. This is an organization that takes great pride in carrying out our mission, and with good reason. The quality and dedication of CDF's employees is outstanding. I am concerned that we are beginning to lose a great deal of experience and institutional memory through retirements. But, I know that many talented employees and future leaders remain. I have been very impressed with the passion that CDF employees have for their chosen careers, as well as the scope of what we do.



I have also met with many of our stakeholders to listen to their customer service needs. There are high expectations of all of us, but I know we are up to the challenges. And many challenges are before us! A few of those challenges that I have heard and/or observed include the following:

Challenges

- Addressing current year and long term base budget deficiencies
- Improving relationships and communication between local government and CDF Sacramento
- Improving communication between CDF Sacramento and the Units
- Increasing Unit input into organizational decision making
- Providing support and information to the Units from CDF Sacramento (IE. Amador policy, details of Schedule A overhead costs, organizational priorities)
- Addressing pay inversion for supervisors and managers and filling key leadership positions
- Assuring fiscally responsible decision making for existing funding (E-fund, contracts, MOA's, etc.)
- Addressing perceived or real concerns regarding standards for hiring, promotion, and selection to incident command teams
- Addressing perceived or real concerns regarding favoritism, retaliation, and other improper workplace behavior
- Coordinating with other state agencies to provide regulatory certainty for THP's while ensuring protection of the environment (watershed, habitat, and species)

- Increasing our ability to select, hire, and train a higher number of entry level CDF employees
- Improving statewide fire training
- Adopting building & fire codes with stakeholder input
- Completing SFM integration with CDF
- Protecting the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) through defensible space compliance, new building standards, and an effective response capability

These are just a few of the challenges and priorities that are our responsibility, working together, to address. I am optimistic that we will all rise to the challenge and solve these issues “one bite at a time.” During the past 30 days some progress has already begun. Some of the progress includes the following:

Progress

- Established an outline for my first 100 days of information gathering and relationship building
- Established a communications mechanism with all CDF employees
- Received briefings on the following topics:
 - Ryan / March Air base location
 - Tulare Transition
 - Outstanding Legal Issues / litigation
 - Budget Pressures
 - IT Security
 - Legislative Issues
 - Board of Forestry
 - PALCO Issues
 - Capital Outlay
 - Contract Counties
 - Labor Issues / Grievances by Unit
 - Union Issues by CDF Firefighters leadership
 - US Forest Service by USFS
 - CDF Region Issues by Region Chiefs
 - Clark Training Center
 - Helicopter Program future
 - Statewide Conservation Camp Program
 - Fire Alliance
 - Active Investigations
 - Coho Salmon
 - THP Issues
 - Bureau of State Audits
 - Mattole Forest
 - Communications / Public Information
 - Jackson Demonstration Forest
 - Biomass

- Visited the following CDF Units or received detailed briefings from the Unit Chiefs:
 - Amador El Dorado Unit
 - Aviation Management Unit
 - Butte Unit Chief
 - Humboldt Del Norte Unit Chief
 - Lassen Modoc Unit Chief
 - Nevada Yuba Placer
 - Riverside Unit
 - San Diego Unit
 - San Mateo/Santa Cruz Unit
 - Siskiyou Unit Chief
 - Sonoma Lake Napa Unit Chief

- Reached out to and began positive relationships with the following individuals, groups and organizations
 - Board of Forestry
 - CDF Firefighters leadership
 - California Professional Firefighters
 - California State Firefighters Association
 - Riverside County Board of Supervisors
 - Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC)
 - Finance Director
 - OES Director
 - Cal OSHA Director
 - CDCR Director
 - Fish & Game Director
 - Governor's Public Safety Liaison
 - FIRESCOPE Board of Directors
 - Cal Chiefs
 - League Chiefs
 - Metro Chiefs
 - Fire District Association of California
 - LA Area Fire Chiefs
 - Santa Clara County Fire Chiefs
 - CDF Contract Counties
 - California Forestry Association
 - Sierra Club
 - US Forest Service

- I have received enough information and am preparing to meet with the Riverside Board of Supervisors at a public meeting on February 28, 2006 to deliver my decision on the Ryan or March question
- We are posting regular updates on the CDF Intranet to inform all employees regarding the progress on the Amador Policy and the Tulare transition

So, as you can see, it has been a very busy and productive first 30 days. I want to remind everyone that while, out of necessity, decisions are being made during the first 100 days, and it is my expectation that a more solid plan of action will be delivered at the end of my information gathering phase. The planning will be inclusive and participative with affected stakeholders. I have received and appreciate the many supportive e-mails regarding this "Chief's Weekly Memo" and do plan to continue to utilize it as one form of information exchange. I do have other plans for seeking ideas and input that will be implemented in the near future. Thank you for your continued support and please continue to be part of the solution.



Ruben Grijalva, Chief
Acting Director

Fire Prevention & Pre-Fire Management

The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) on Wednesday, Feb. 8, 2006 approved defensible space regulations. These regulations and associated guidelines give advice and direction to the public and CDF inspectors on how to comply with the new 100 foot defensible space clearance requirements. The Board's action culminates a year-long effort in which staff has been working with stakeholders and the Board to come up with something that gives guidance, but still allows flexibility. Sacramento staff is working on public information and education documents, as well as a training curriculum for agency inspectors. The training will provide guidance on how to apply the Board's rules, informing the public, and instructions on completing a new defensible space inspection form.

Resource Management

The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection agreed to extend the public comment period through March 1, 2006 to give the public additional time to review the Draft EIR. Two public hearings were held. The first was held in Ukiah on February 2 and the second was held in Sacramento on February 9. Both sessions were sparsely attended and ample time was available for those providing comments.

The 2005 Golden Trowel Award was given to Registered Professional Forester Chuck Schoendienst for his outstanding efforts to incorporate archaeological site protection into forestry projects in northern California. The presentation ceremony took place on Wednesday, Feb. 8, 2006 at the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection meeting in Sacramento. CDF Archaeologist Richard Jenkins delivered

an excellent report highlighting Chuck's career and listing his superior accomplishments in archaeological site stewardship.

Cooperative Fire, Training and Safety

Statewide CDC/CDRC Camps meeting was conducted on February 1 and 2 in Sacramento. Program staff is reviewing the discussion and action items identified for follow up.

The Amador Working Group continues to work on and discuss concepts for additional cost formulas. Program staff briefed CDF Firefighters on the progress to date this week. A briefing with local government cooperators is anticipated shortly.

Program staff continues to work with the Budget office on the revisions to the Schedule A Administrative Rate formula and description. Sent out the SFA Request for Projects Application package which is due April 3, 2006

The Sierra Incident was approved under FMAG (CA-CNF-000300), (Sierra Peak, Cleveland National Forest, Orange and Riverside County)

Aviation Management

There are currently 6 S-2T Airtankers, 3 OV-10 Air Attack, and 2 helicopters providing support on wildfire missions in southern California, based out of Ramona and Hemet-Ryan airports. Winter maintenance continues on the remainder of the aircraft in Sacramento. These efforts are slightly ahead of schedule, with more than 50% of work complete.

The Aviation Safety Department has created a Safety Action Group (SAG), which will bring together representatives from the AMU, contract pilots and maintenance, along with operators in the field. The group will proactively address immediate concerns and long-term trends. The first quarterly meeting will convene March 15 at McClellan.

The helicopter program augmented its rescue capability by completing certification of the hoist on its Hemet-Ryan based aircraft.

State Fire Marshal

On March 1 Deputy State Fire Marshal Antoinette Weiskamp will be relocating her office to CSU Hayward.

SFM Southern California Staff is working with Porterville Developmental Center in Tulare County which is in the process of changing from a Developmental Center to a Forensic Clinic. This means they will be housing patients who have been classified as criminally insane rather than their current patients who are individuals with developmental disabilities.

Staff is finishing work on a new Fresno County Juvenile Facility which is scheduled to open March 1.

We experienced our first pipeline leak of the year last week when a farmer who was disking his field hit a Shell pipeline and released approximately 900 barrels of fuel.

The SFM Code adoption process is moving forward and anyone interested should visit the SFM website (*Code Adoption Process*) to review the latest express terms of the proposed amendments to the 2006 Edition of the International Building and Fire Codes, as well as the calendar of events which defines some critical dates for the review-adoption procedure. The project is on schedule to have the document ready for review by the SFM shortly after April 1.